

**Opening Statement for the Record**  
**The Honorable Greg Walden**  
**Energy and Commerce Committee Hearing**  
**PPACA Implantation Failures: Answers from HHS**  
Wednesday, October 30, 2013  
2123 Rayburn – 9:00 am

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding this very important hearing. The fact is that the rollout of healthcare.gov has been a failure at every turn. The federal exchange still isn't working for millions of Americans who visit the website trying to enroll. In my home state of Oregon, our state run exchange, Cover Oregon, still hasn't even gone online. A month after they were supposed to be up and running, they have yet to sell even one single private insurance policy through the exchange website.

But what's most troubling is that Obamacare isn't just a website. In fact, the website is supposed to be the easy part. And now, we're seeing more and more cracks in the foundation. This administration promised, in unequivocal terms that, "If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what."

Despite White House rhetoric, millions of Americans are receiving cancellation notices in the mail. In Oregon alone, 150,000 people are losing their insurance plans. Health insurance they liked and that their President promised they could keep. I've heard from dozens of people living in Oregon's Second Congressional District who are now struggling to make ends meet because their premiums are doubling, their deductibles are going up, and they're getting worse coverage for it. It's just another broken promise from the administration.

And the problems don't end there. What's next? What new hurdle is about to be thrown in the way of the American people? For one, the Affordable Care Act required the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to rebase home health payments. The stated goal was to align payment with costs. The law gave CMS the authority to rebase the payments by as much as 3.5 percent per year from 2014 through 2017. Rather than implement these cuts gradually-seeing the effect as they go- or on a year by year basis, CMS regulations recommend payments be rebased by the full 3.5 percent every year for all four years. Taken as a whole, these cuts result in a 14 percent cut to Medicare home health payments.

These policies might seem like something done in a vacuum to bureaucrats in D.C. But they have significant and lasting effects for people living in the real world. My home District is 70,000 square miles. We stretch across a distance roughly as far as Cincinnati to Baltimore. We're mountainous, we're rural, and some counties are without a physician, let alone a hospital. For the Oregonians I represent, access to home health providers is crucial.

My family and I have seen first-hand the powerful impact that compassionate and highly skilled home health nurses provide. We've used it with our own loved ones and know how meaningful it is to be able to recover at home, in familiar surroundings, with your family by your side. It

would be devastating for the people in Oregon's Second District- and throughout rural America- if these services were no longer available to them.

Unfortunately, the Affordable Care Act could limit access to home health. CMS's cuts to home health would result in negative Medicare margins for home health care providers in nearly every single state. Oregon's margins would fall to negative 26.5 percent.

I was one of 142 members of the House who sent a letter to Administrator Tavenner expressing our concerns about this very issue back in September. To date, we haven't heard back. But this issue is not one that is going to go away. As we move from one crisis point with the flawed implementation of the government takeover of health care to the next, this issue will, inevitably, come to the forefront. Too many of our nation's seniors and rural residents depend on the availability, reliability, and affordability of home health care services.

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member. I look forward to hearing what the administration plans to do to protect Americans from a fatally flawed law that reduces access to health care, increases costs, cuts Medicare, and puts a barrier of government red tape between patients and their doctors.